



# European Crime Prevention Award (ECPA)

## Best Practice Conference (BPC)

Project Entry Form 2012

Please answer the following questions in English language.

1. Is this your country's ECPA entry or is it an additional project. (Only one ECPA entry per country plus up two other projects)

ECPA entry for Cyprus

2. What is the title of the project?

**Community Policing - Nicosia within the walls**

3. Please give a short general description of the project.

Community police engages in mixed patrols – foot patrols, patrols on bicycles as well as car patrols in certain areas of Nicosia within the walls. Community police patrols on a five day basis, including weekends, morning and afternoon / evening according to specific rota, especially the two main shopping areas of Nicosia within walls : Ledras street and Onasagorou street as well as Eleftheria square. Patrolling on foot and on bicycle gives the advantage of easier access everywhere but also proximity to citizens who might like to report an incident.

4. Please describe the objective(s) of the project?

**Increase police accessibility** in the areas of Nicosia within the walls which are in a large part **pedestrian areas** by using mixed patrol (foot patrol, bicycle patrol and car patrol).

**Increase the visibility of police** in the area in order to **prevent crime** but also to **enforce the law** by apprehending lawbreakers, leading to a **reduction of crime** levels in the area.



A further aim has been from the start, the **reduction of the fear of crime** amongst residents / shop owners / visitors of Nicosia and finally **increase of public confidence in the police**.

##### 5. How was the project implemented?

Community police officially began in 2003 on a pilot basis in three different areas of the island.

The existence of the green line and the buffer zone dividing Nicosia between the occupied areas of Cyprus, and the areas under the effective control of the Republic of Cyprus, has resulted in the movement of the native Greek Cypriot population to other areas further away from the centre of Nicosia. This led to the development of marginalised and neglected areas in the centre, left as a cheap housing solution for the low income, mainly foreign population, of various nationalities. The combination of various cultures and beliefs and customs, initially resulted in tension between the residents with frequent rows and clashes. **This random gathering of different cultures has increased the need for a more diverse policing, including community policing.**

**After the checkpoint of Ledra opened in 2008, it enabled the movement of pedestrians to and from the occupied areas, increasing the opportunities of criminals to act in the area and flee to the occupied part of the island.**

In 2009, after various meetings with the local authorities who were concerned about the safety and security of the area, the police decided to invest in two community police officers who would contribute towards a greater feeling of security among people of the area, and of course towards prevention of crime. Two officers would patrol on foot most of the area which is extensively pedestrianised. To help increase the presence of police officers in the area, these officers were stationed at the Ledra Street substation of the police, next to the Ledra check point. Manning the substation at the specific point with community police officers was of extreme importance, both for practical and for symbolic purposes. The centre of the capital of Cyprus, had to be preserved at any cost.

At a later stage, it was deemed necessary to equip these two officers with bikes since there was a problem of accessibility in some areas: some areas were too far away to go on foot, but were also extensively pedestrianised, so it was impossible to go by car, so they ended up covering only some areas. Bikes would enable them to visit areas

that were further away as well as respond immediately to scenes of crime. Of course this meant that they should be provided also with a biker's uniform, arrange for slightly modified schedules and facilities in the station where all gear would be kept, and so on.

Police on bikes patrol during morning shifts either on their own or in pairs. In the afternoon / evening, each officer patrols the very sensitive areas on foot, accompanied by a second community police officer who normally patrols a different area of Nicosia. Although extra police officers patrol the area during evening and night, community police have a prime role in the safety of the area.

6. Were partners involved in planning and/or development and/or implementation of the project? If so, who were they, and what were their roles?

The initial call was made by the Municipal authority of Nicosia in conjunction with the association of shop owners of the area, but it was implemented by the Police. At a further stage, and after community police in Nicosia (within the walls) has been in force for about three years, the Municipality of Nicosia requested the implementation of a neighbourhood watch programme, as an additional measure for preventing crime. If and when this actually begins, the police will work together with the municipality authorities of Nicosia.

Meanwhile, to assist the project of community police in the area within the walls, the Nicosia Municipality has decided to make more extensive use of its traffic wardens, in an effort to lower traffic law violations within the area, complementing the work done by the police.

7. How did you build in plans to measure the performance of the project? Has the project been evaluated? How, and by whom?

During the early phase of the implementation of the project, community police officers were instructed to report on their activities electronically through a special program, after every shift. This was monitored on a daily basis by the Crime Prevention Office at Police Headquarters for two years.

With the development of the community policing into one of mixed patrol, namely on foot and on bikes, besides the usual reports they submitted through the electronic program, they were given instructions to give a day to day report on their activities at

the end of each shift showing whether the use of bikes was helpful to them (or not) and in what ways. Again, this was monitored on a daily basis by the Crime Prevention Office at the Cyprus Police Headquarters for a period of six months as a trial period. At the end of the six months, the project was evaluated by the Crime Prevention Office at the Police Headquarters.

Performance was numerically measured using the tools of a Community police electronic program, but also using the day to day reports of the two police officers on bike which they sent in after every shift. These reports included more than the numerical factors, thus contributing to a fuller picture of what goes on.

Additionally, ordinary citizens (residents, shop owners and visitors) were routinely asked about their opinion, and of course we needed to get the feeling of the police officers themselves who were out in the streets facing the problems of the area.

Additional comments on whether it is successful or not, were taken from articles in newspapers and periodicals giving the feeling of the people for the existence of such a measure. The results are described below.

#### 8. What were the results? How far were the objectives of the project achieved?

The mere presence of police officers on foot, was enough to make people feel safer, a feeling enhanced by the greater geographical coverage by the police. Police presence meant that crime was prevented: comparing police statistics for the year 2010 to 2012, we see a reduction of 17% of incidents of personal assaults in the area. During the same periods, there has been a 10% decrease in public disturbances due to drunkenness, 17% decrease in conflicts and **clashes**, and a 25% reduction in theft.

Police officers on bike were able to reach out to more people in more difficult neighbourhoods (where police cars may not be used) on a routine basis, and in the context of building a positive and trusting relationship with the public. It is estimated that Community Police Officers meet about 110 persons a day (in the street) when they are on bike, 10% more people than when they are on foot, and they are able to pay 12% more visits to homes and businesses.

Various complaints reported to Police officers on bike were handled immediately since

they could arrive at the scene in minutes, being able to apprehend criminals before they leave the scene and giving immediate feedback to the public, raising public confidence in the police. The police officers were able to deal with thrice the number of problems, on the spot, after the bikes were introduced. Thus, many incidents were resolved immediately and did not end up in formal complaints.

Police officers on bikes were able to reach out to more citizens that have been victimised, offering support in various ways as well as advising them on issues of security while at the same time, the actual number of victims of crime decreased by 30%. This means that community police reaches out and supports a higher percentage of victims.

During the pilot period, a reduction in complaints was recorded while at the same time police officers were able to give more time to each complaint and to visit people more often. This, it is estimated, was directly related to the higher visibility of the police in the area.

Community police officers however are not just “being nice” but they also enforce the law. Comparing the police statistics for the years 2010 and 2012, an increase of 10% in the issuance of tickets for various crimes has been noted.

Greater visibility of the police and the friendly image of the police on bike has encouraged citizens, whether they are permanent residents / shop owners of the area, or visitors, to approach police officers, enquire about issues that concern them and ask for their help in matters of importance to them.

Besides the above, a survey conducted for the police showed a 32% concern for the quality of policing of the area in 2009. This dropped to 23% in 2011 when the same survey was repeated.

It is estimated that the project has positively contributed in many ways, and it has therefore been decided to extend its operation to two more areas of the island, the seafront area of Limassol and the seafront area of Paphos both of which gather many people (both locals and visitors) especially during the summer months when there is great influx of visitors in these areas.

The only kind of law violations the community police on bikes were not able to tackle as successfully on their own, are the traffic violations that have to do with 1. Using motorcycles on pedestrian roads and 2. Parking violations. In order to deal with these, the Traffic Department has introduced special patrols to deal with motorcycles, and the Municipality of Nicosia has taken on the parking violations.

9. Give a concrete description of the implementation of the project and the references.

Community policing in Cyprus aims to promote the quality of life amongst people living in Cyprus whether they are native and permanent citizens or temporary visitors. The quality of life implies an increase in the feeling of security and safety in the communities with the parallel reduction in the fear of crime. The Cyprus Police was at the time of the implementation of this project becoming more and more service orientated than in its early years, realising the importance of personal and positive contact between the police and the public it serves.

The whole project was designed to cover all the areas of Cyprus under the effective control of the Republic of Cyprus, assigning one community police officer to an average number of 3000 residents. In 2003 it was launched on a pilot basis in three different areas of Cyprus with 29 trained community police officers. Gradually the number of community police officers increased to 56 especially as more and more communities asked for a community police officer. The Cyprus police, taking into account the positive work being done and the influence this has had on the quality of life of the people concerned, has invested to a great extent in the work of community police officers. A number of crimes are being solved with the help of community police officers who have gradually become the eyes and the ears of their community. Quite a few problems are continuously being resolved with the help of these friendly officers who are aware of any dangers to the quality of life of their "neighbours".

The duties of the Community officers include, apart from patrol (mainly on foot), advising people, businesses and so on, on the measures they could take towards greater security of their properties and greater safety for them and their families. At the same time, and in close cooperation with the local authorities, they work towards solving problems in the community that could give rise to criminality.

One of the most important groups in the community for the officers, is the young people, and especially children studying at the elementary school at Phaneromeni who are

mostly children of immigrant, often low income, families. Reaching out to these children helps change perceptions towards the police amongst the immigrant population, cultivating positive relationships, reducing alienation and the possibility of criminal acts.

Given the fact that they work five times a week, including weekends, balancing morning and afternoon shifts, they practically see all the categories of people in their area – children, pensioners, housewives as well the working men and women. They visit schools in their area on a daily basis as well as any high risk premises such as jewellery shops, banks, and so on.

They are trained police officers, with all the powers of a police officer, and despite the fact that their image has always been one of gentle nature, friendly and helping, they have also been seen to arrest suspects in a number of cases. Their role is a difficult one because they have to balance their kind nature on one hand and the enforcement of the law on the other.

The need for Community police officers in the areas within the walls of Nicosia, has been one of prime importance. After the municipality of Nicosia asked for help to maintain public order in these areas, two community police officers were assigned to the area.

Community police in the areas within the walls of Nicosia, use mixed patrols, namely foot patrols, patrol on bicycles as well as car patrol in certain areas, while a neighbourhood watch scheme is being planned to work in conjunction with them. During certain periods, usually in the late afternoons when there are more visitors in the area, community police officers are accompanied by one more community police officer who serves in another community and by special patrol units of the police.

Community police officers patrol on a five day basis, including weekends, morning and afternoon according to a specific rota, especially in the two main shopping areas of Nicosia within walls : Ledras street and Onasagorou street as well as Eleftheria square. Patrolling on foot and on bicycle gives the advantage of easier access everywhere but also proximity to citizens who might like to report something.

Community police on bikes in the specific area is an example of how police is evolving according to social and other conditions. Being a divided city and the capital of Cyprus, Nicosia rightly deserves more attention regarding safety, as its pedestrian streets



accommodate communities living next to army barracks and bring together different cultures.

10. Are there reports or documents available on the project? In print or on the Web?  
Please, give references to the most relevant ones.

Panagiotou, G. Community Police : operation and / or creation of new police stations in Cyprus, Nicosia July 2003 (Greek)

Andoniadou, G, Chatzidemetriou, M., Kotzikas, S. Report of the Coordinating Committee on Community Police on the first year of its operation, and possible future expansion, Nicosia October 2004 (Greek)

Cypronetwork Public Assessment of Police Services, Nicosia August 2011(Greek)

Charalambous, E. «Cycling against illegality» Protevousa Magazine, December 2011 pp22-26

Police Order 1/78 (2006) (Greek)

“Community Police in the area within the walls of Nicosia” Crime Prevention Office, Police Headquarters, 1.6.11 (Greek)

“Use of bicycles by members of the police” (Greek), Crime Prevention Office, Police Headquarters 4 January 2012

“Issuance of tickets by police wardens in the area within of walls of Nicosia”, article in the newspaper Fileleftheros 10.8.12 p14 (Greek)

11. How is the project funded? How is the cost – benefit balance of the project? Please give references to relevant information.

The project is funded by the state.

Some equipment was funded by Police Officers Coop Bank

12. Please, write a *one page* description of the project:

Community Policing - Nicosia within the walls has been implemented after the opening of the checkpoint of Ledra Street, as a way to ensure police visibility for the benefit of





the people who lived or worked in an important (from a historical point of view but otherwise neglected) area, as an ultimate aim to lower the fear of crime, increase the sense of quality of life but also give important messages to would be criminals aiming to lower crime in the area.

The project initially included foot patrols and later developed into mixed patrols aiming to reach even more areas that were difficult to access otherwise. The community police officers work either by themselves or in pairs, depending on the day of the week, and time of day, (which determines the volume of pedestrian traffic in Ledra street and Onasagorou street - the most commercial streets of the area). During the weekends and in the evenings, when there are more people coming and going, community police officers from other areas of Nicosia join forces as an additional measure for securing a crimeless area.

The community police officers placed in the area were selected according to their experience in investigation and a strong but pleasant personality, aiming to bring out the best results. Their duties include the usual patrols but also visiting shops and businesses as well as homes and schools, advising people on security measures they could take themselves for their physical protection and the protection of their property, combining law enforcement and public relations.

A number of criminals have been apprehended due to the high-quality work that is being done in the area by community police officers.

The project has been running for about three years now in total and the comments given by the residents and the business people so far have been very positive. The police officers have not only materialized the initial aim of being visible, but they have also been enforcing the law on many occasions, leading to arrests, therefore contributing to the feeling amongst the people of the area, of being looked after. The project is being evaluated at regular intervals by the Crime Prevention Office, at the Cyprus Police Headquarters.